



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Vision 2020 Standing Committee Minutes 09/23/2004

ARLINGTON VISION 2020 STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2004 MEETING

Attendance: Jane Howard, Joey Glushko, Andrew Fischer, Peter Howard, Elizabeth Karpati, Leslie Mayer, Allen Reedy, Heidi Sheehan, Patricia Watson.

- The minutes of the August 30 meeting were accepted as presented.

Town Day wrapup:

- The Diversity Task Group members at the Vision 2020 table were interviewed on cable.
- Two high school teachers stopped by to ask for projects for their students.
- Heidi's handout with information about volunteer opportunities will be distributed in the schools.
- Arlington maps sold briskly (32 copies).
- At Andrew's table on insurance, 15 people signed up for information.

Task Group reports:

- Diversity has already had some publicity in the *Arlington Advocate* about Diversity Month in October. Some of the Selectmen have agreed to make introductory remarks at some Diversity Month events.
- Communications and Community and Citizen Service may have a joint meeting since both are involved with preparing the census insert.

Ideas are needed for the census insert.

- There are some leadership gaps: Governance Task Group, Spy Pond Committee [also Sustainable Arlington]. There is also no student representative yet.
- The in-service training that was contemplated as a follow-up to the April session should be postponed until these gaps are filled, probably until next spring.

Peer Communities Study by Fiscal Resources Task Group (Peter Howard and Allen Reedy reporting):

- The study looked at the 102 communities covered by MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council). The most prominent conclusion is that there are no truly "peer" communities – all that are similar to Arlington in some respects are dissimilar in others.
- The first draft of the study report was distributed and discussed. It includes tables comparing Arlington to its surrounding communities, and to the six MAPC communities most similar in one respect or another, and an introduction with conclusions and cautions about using these figures.
- Additional cautions brought out in the discussion: (1) Figures shown may be "apples and oranges" – e.g. a cost item may be included in the school budget in some communities and elsewhere in others. (2) Figures are a "snapshot" and may include untypical costs for some things in some communities, e.g. the big sewer separation project in Cambridge. I.e., beware of "sound bite" comparisons.
- The final "Peer Communities" report will include more cautions in the introduction about what the figures and comparisons mean and how they should or should not be used.
- Recommended uses of the report: For the Selectmen; for Town departments, introduced by the Town Manager in his meetings with department heads; in Vision 2020 report to Town Meeting 2005.
- There is another study, "Municipal Yardstick," done by a commercial firm in December 2003, which compares Arlington to the mean of 20 communities on 20 characteristics. The value of these figures depends on which 20 communities are included! The Finance Committee has copies of this study.

Town Hall report:

- At the former Time Oldsmobile site 9 duplexes and a single-family home are being built. None will be affordable because the developer met all criteria for escaping the affordable housing requirement.
- The plan for making the Reservoir dam safe by inserting metal I-walls instead of by removing the trees has been approved by the Office of Dam Safety.